



Destination Visitor Survey Strategic Regional Research – Tasmania

Community perceptions of the impacts of tourism – Break O’Day: Summary of results

This report is part of the *Stage 2: Social Impacts of Tourism in Tasmanian Communities* project funded by Tourism Research Australia and supported by Tourism Tasmania and the Break O’Day Municipality. The study examined the perceptions of Break O’Day residents towards tourism within their community during the period February to March 2010.

A quantitative research method was used, based on a refined version of a questionnaire that had been developed and used previously in a range of destinations. The questions related to general impressions of tourism and a number of specific tourism impact statements.

The study used a three phased method to collect data. In the first phase, a postcard notifying residents of the survey was sent to a sample of households within Break O’Day Municipality. The second phase of the study was the distribution of the questionnaire; this was followed up in the third phase with a reminder postcard. An online version of the questionnaire was also made available for completion.

Break O’Day is one of the largest local government areas in the state, covering an area of 3,809 square kilometres and with a population of over 6,000. It is located along Tasmania’s East Coast with key towns in the area being St Helens, St Marys, Pyengana and Binalong Bay. The Bay of Fires and the Mount William National Park are main attractions in the area. Key industries are tourism, mining, forestry, agriculture, fishing and aquaculture.

For Break O’Day, a total of 232 responses were received from local residents out of a sample household population of 1,500. This represents a 15% response rate. The response group contained 56% females and the main age group was 60 or older (57%). With regard to the length of residency in the Break O’Day Municipality, almost a third had lived in the area for more than 20 years or their whole life (32%) while almost a half of the respondent group (46%) had been born elsewhere in Tasmania. The majority of respondents were home owners who lived permanently in the Break O’Day Municipality (89%).



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Table 1 Characteristics of Break O'Day Municipality respondents

		%
Gender	Male	44
	Female	56
Age group	18–39 years	4
	40–59 years	39
	60 years plus	57
Years of residence	Less than 2 years	8
	2–5 years	20
	6–10 years	20
	11–20 years	21
	More than 20 years	25
	All my life	7
Place of birth	Within 50km of Break O'Day	8
	Elsewhere in Tasmania	46
	Elsewhere in Australia	29
	In another country	17
Education	Less than Year 10	18
	Completed Year 10	20
	Completed Year 12	9
	Trade qualification	14
	Technical college/TAFE	17
	Undergraduate degree	10
	Postgraduate degree	8
	Other	3
Living arrangements	Own home, live there permanently	89
	Rent home in Break O'Day	9
	Own holiday home in Break O'Day	1
	Other	1

The results from the survey in the Break O'Day Municipality indicate a fairly low level of support for tourism at a personal level and quite a high level of support for the impact of tourism on the community as a whole compared to other communities in Tasmania. At the personal level, 22% of respondents felt that tourism had a negative impact on their quality of life which aligns closely with the percentage of respondents who indicated that they adjusted their lifestyle as a result of tourism (17%).

Based on the responses to the open questions in the survey, the main factors causing this problem would appear to be related to parking, overcrowded camping and campervan facilities and the need for better road maintenance. While respondents recognised the positive effects on their personal quality of life due to tourism's influence on 'facilities', 'pride in the area' and 'interesting things to do', the negative impacts in relation to the 'environment', 'overcrowding' and 'delinquent behaviour' detracted from the net benefit.

Despite these problems at the personal level, respondents rated the impact of tourism on the community as a whole quite highly in relation to studies done in other regions of Tasmania. The main factors driving this outcome were 'improved facilities', 'economic benefits' and 'interesting things to do'. Similar to the individual level, the negative issues for the community as a whole were 'environmental harm', 'overcrowding' and 'delinquent behaviour'.

Protection of the environment, overcrowding and the need to more effectively control campervans were the issues that came through most strongly from respondents in Break O'Day in relation to improving the performance of tourism in the region.

First impressions of tourism

One of the first questions asked of each respondent was their impression of tourism. These responses were coded according to themes. The most common themes which emerged were:

- The economic benefits that tourism brings to the region such as more jobs and income for local businesses.
- The impact that tourists have on crowding the roads, their driving habits and the difficulties with parking that increased tourism causes.
- The impact of tourists on the environment, especially the Bay of Fires. This was perceived by many respondents as being destructive to the environment.
- The impact that campervans and campers have on the region such as overcrowding, additional traffic and sometimes destruction to the campsites.

Contact with tourists and preferences for growth

Respondents were also asked various questions relating to their contact with tourists, their feelings about tourists, and their preferences for future tourism development. Respondents most commonly stated they liked tourists (46%), while a large proportion were happy to tolerate tourists (35%).

In comparison to many other Tasmanian communities surveyed, quite a large proportion of respondents stated that they adjusted their lifestyle to accommodate tourists (17%), which can be an early warning sign of future difficulties. In regard to contact with tourists, only 3% of the respondents reported that they 'never come into contact with tourists', while almost equal proportions of respondents stated they met tourists but may or may not have interacted with them (36%). Over a quarter of respondents (26%) were engaged in tourism in some way and so met tourists through their work.

When asked about tourism development preferences:

- Over half were happy to see continued tourism growth (56%) along current lines.
- A further 17% thought that future tourism growth was needed, although it should be focused in a different direction.
- Fewer than 8% expressed a desire for less tourism in the future.

The key themes regarding alternative development of tourism focused around:

- Protecting the environment.
- Improving infrastructure/parking.
- Providing more facilities and services such as a town swimming pool, better roads, more shops that sell different products and services and longer shopping hours.
- Developing attractions and camping grounds.

With regard to general population growth in the region:

- Just over one third (35%) were happy to see continued growth along current lines.
- The largest group of respondents (40%) wanted to see more population growth but only if accompanied by the development of new facilities.

Impacts of tourism

When asked about the impact of tourism, 53% of respondents rated tourism as having a positive impact on their personal quality of life. In contrast, 22% rated this impact as negative and over a quarter of respondents stated there was no impact. The overall mean rating for the impact of tourism on personal quality of life was 0.67 on a seven point scale ranging from -3 to +3 where the positive end of the scale represented a positive impact. Other Tasmanian communities have obtained ratings for the impact of tourism on the personal quality of life of residents of 0.10 (Bruny Island), 0.82 (Glenorchy), 0.85 (Kentish), 0.88 (Dorset), 0.94 (Richmond), 1.12 (King Island) and 1.22 (Flinders Island). It can be seen, therefore, that the rating for Break O'Day is at the low end of this range and needs to be monitored.

Respondents were also asked about the impact of tourism on the community as a whole. Almost 90% of respondents rated the impact as positive with only 9% indicating that this impact was negative. The overall mean rating for the effect on the community as a whole was 2.02, which is quite strong compared to other Tasmanian communities that have been surveyed where scores ranged from 1.06 (Bruny Island) to 2.28 (Kentish).

Specific impacts

Residents were asked to rate some specific impacts of tourism in terms of the effect on them personally and also the effect on the community as a whole. In terms of the personal impact of tourism, the results show strong support for the positive impacts of tourism such as having improved facilities, giving pride to residents and improving the maintenance of public facilities. Negative impacts on personal quality of life such as damage to the environment, disruption to residents' normal way of life, overcrowding and delinquent behaviour were noted. The delinquent behaviour appeared to be associated with rubbish left by tourists and vandalism (although it is not clear if this was seen to be caused by tourists or local residents). The most highly rated positive impacts for the community as a whole were that tourism provides better facilities and brings economic benefits to the community.

Respondents were also given the opportunity to provide more comments on personal and community impacts of tourism. Common themes in the comments were:

- Tourism improves business in providing more customers and on a more regular basis as well as creating new businesses such as tour operators and dive shops.
- Tourism encourages a more worldly environment with tourists creating a dynamic and interesting place in which to live.
- The increase in prices due to the seasonal nature of tourism is frustrating for residents.
- Tourism brings tension between environmental sustainability and development and there is a sense that tourism is destroying some of the beauty of the surrounding environment.
- Tourism influences the allocation of resources in that money is spent on tourism facilities that could be spent on residents' facilities and infrastructure.
- General negative effects of tourism such as crowding, traffic congestion and parking problems.

This summary is extracted from research conducted by Tourism Research Australia and supported by Tourism Tasmania and the Municipality of Break O' Day. For the full Strategic Regional Research Report, please email tourism.research@ret.gov.au.

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